

ROCKY HILL PLANNING BOARD
Minutes of the August 12, 2008 Meeting

Present: R. Ayrey, T. Bremner, C. Cann, T. Corlis, L. Goldman, J. Hasser, C. Pihokken, R. Whitlock

Absent: D. Kluchinski, G. White, A. Youtz, E. Zimmerman

Also present: V. Kimson and K. Philip

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

Pursuant to the Sunshine Law, a notice of this meeting's date, time, place and agenda was mailed to the news media, posted on the Municipal bulletin board and filed with the Municipal Clerk. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS: Chairman Pihokken stated that the planners will be present our our September meeting to discuss COAH. He advised that the order of the two discussion items on the agenda are being changed, the sidewalk discussion will be first.

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: The meeting was then opened to the public, Mr. and Mrs. Farranetta, Washington Street residents, spoke about the Washington Street sidewalks and their comments are noted within that discussion. Being that no one else wished to address the board the public portion of the meeting was closed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

July 8, 2008 – Motion made by T. Bremner and L. Goldman seconded the motion to approve the minutes of July 8, 2008. The vote was 7-0 in favor. Motion carried.

July 8, 2008 (COAH - closed) - Motion made by T. Bremner and L. Goldman seconded the motion to approve the closed session minutes to discuss COAH from July 8, 2008. The vote was 7-0 in favor. Motion carried.

July 8, 2008 (closed session) Motion was made by L. Goldman and C. Cann seconded the motion to approve the closed session minutes of July 8, 2008. The vote was 6-0 in favor. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION:

a) State Historic Office Project: Washington Street Sidewalks

V. Kimson, Esq., advised that the Planning Board has been asked to review the design and provide input to Borough Council. According to the land use law, the Planning Board is mandated to review capital projects.

William Tanner, Engineer for the Board, stated that grant monies were received last year from the NJDOT for this project. The application to the State was under a grant for "safe sidewalks". NJDOT grants are site specific; the money cannot be used for any other project. This sidewalk has been identified as a need within the capital budget by the two past administrations. Mr. Tanner stated that the proposed sidewalk is one foot off the curb line and in some cases the shoulder of the roadway is reduced to 18 inches. Two or three trees in front of the Hayden tract would be removed and the line moved behind other trees in order to preserve them. He advised that there are some areas that require retaining walls. Some of the walls will be removed once it is determined that the wall is not needed. Mr. Tanner stated that the proposed walls are one to two feet in height, the homeowners have been made aware of the project and they requested that

something be put into place to control the flow of the stormwater. Mr. Tanner stated that this will be done.

C. Pihokken asked the reason for the sidewalk. Mr. Tanner stated that it is safer to have the sidewalk than to have a pedestrian cross a busy roadway. T. Bremner asked if all of the grant money will be used for this project. Mr. Tanner responded that every penny will be used. T. Bremner asked the width of the sidewalk. Mr. Tanner stated that it is four feet in width since this is the standard width for a sidewalk. T. Bremner stated that there is a three foot wide sidewalk on Washington Street from the library to Montgomery Avenue and the sidewalk width appears to be adequate. Mr. Tanner stated that if someone steps off the sidewalk and gets injured, that sidewalk would be considered substandard. He advised that we are not able to construct a substandard sidewalk. R. Whitlock stated that although he is not completely in favor of the sidewalk, he understands that there is a safety concern.

L. Goldman recommended the stones in the walls be secured so people don't get injured. J. Hasser stated that she is not in favor of people sitting on the walls. Mr. Tanner stated that the concrete can come to a point instead of being a flat surface. C. Pihokken asked about the walls proposed in the historic district, Mr. Tanner stated that he thought stacked stone would be preferred over plain concrete.

The meeting was opened to the public.

Edward Zimmerman, speaking from the audience, stated that one of the reasons Council applied for the grant is because the sidewalk would be connecting the shopping center on 206 and 518 to River Road. The sidewalk would allow people to walk the entire length of the Borough without having to cross the street.

John Farranetta, 54 Washington Street, was sworn in and stated that the sidewalk on the south side of Washington Street is fine. The sidewalk on the north side is 30 inches away from an active roadway, he asked that Council not allow the removal of the large mature trees in order to facilitate this strip of concrete within the historic district. He felt that this portion of the sidewalk would probably not be used too often if it is constructed.

Anne Farranetta, 54 Washington Street, was sworn in and asked if money has been earmarked for this project.

Phil Hayden, 38 Washington Street, was sworn in and asked the evidence of need for the sidewalk since there is another route already in existence. He also stated that the historic preservation office should provide approval for all projects within the historic district and if the project is not large enough for their jurisdiction they would respond this way. The proposal requires excavation and wall construction which may be a concern to the historic preservation office. He commended the Borough for seeking grant money for the project but there will always be maintenance costs for the sidewalk and this is not covered by grant money. In addition, he is concerned about the cost to the property owner for snow removal. The proposed retention walls will create a barrier between the street and his property, future development of his property is permitted but the walls would have to be removed if the property is developed in the future and this is another cost he must bear. He would prefer not to have the walls because trees are an acceptable form of mitigation. Mr. Hayden stated that a majority of the stormwater runoff from the hill collects on his property, the water channels down the side meadow and discharges

by the big cut in their lawn. He asked if the sidewalk construction requires water quality retention basins or recharging and Mr. Tanner stated that the improvements are 4200 square feet which is less than an acre of disturbance therefore approval is not needed. Mr. Hayden stated that he would rather not see the sidewalk installed in front of his property but trees can be removed if the Borough recommends this.

Jeffrey Green, 26 Washington Street, was sworn in and stated that he is in favor of the sidewalk. He has concerns about the drainage since there are water runoff problems in the area. There is a lot of scrub which can be removed but other vegetation would have to be cleared out for this project.

John Farranetta, 54 Washington Street, stated that there are trees in front of his home that are rather large, the trees create a barrier from the roadway. The traffic on the road has increased and he asked the board to recommend that these trees not be removed. Mr. Tanner stated that the walls in front of 54 Washington Street are only one foot in height and he will attempt to eliminate the walls and they will install a snow fence around the trees to preserve them during construction. He advised that he is happy to meet with all of the residents in order to address their concerns.

Mr. Tanner stated that with all of the changes being considered, the look of the project may change and this is a concern because it may affect the grant. C. Pihokken recommended that Council retain someone who can give an opinion about development in the historic district and what regulations we are attempting to meet.

Mr. Hayden asked about the proposed changes to the area near his lower field and main lawn. He requested that the proposed walls in front of his property be eliminated. He stated that increasing the sidewalk width to four feet is a standard approach but he asked that the Borough consider a reduced width for the sidewalk.

Meeting was closed to the public.

Board discussion took place.

R. Whitlock asked that Borough Council work with the residents to alleviate their concerns. R. Ayrey asked that a three foot sidewalk be considered, if this is permitted. T. Bremner stated that reducing the width of the sidewalk to three feet in some areas would save trees. Landscaping, if funds are available, could be installed in other areas in lieu of a wall.

Ms. Kimson read the following recommendations into the record:

1. The Board recommends that the concrete top of the proposed rock fence be pointed, rounded or cap locked.
2. The Board recommends that the Borough Engineer consult with adjacent property owners to accommodate possible drainage issues.
3. The Board recommends that the location of the gas lines and the sanitary sewer lines should be reviewed prior to the commencement of construction. The Board also recommends that the sewer lines should be televised before and after construction.

4. The Board recommends that, where possible, the proposed rock wall should be eliminated or minimized, if possible.
5. The Board recommends that the sidewalk be re-routed to address concerns regarding the retention of mature trees.
6. The Board recommends that if existing ground cover (myrtle / grass) will be disturbed as a result of the sidewalk construction, that the vegetation (myrtle / grass) be replaced if funds are available.
7. The Board understands that this project is currently under review by the State Historic Preservation Office. In the event that office recommends that the sidewalk width be reduced, the Planning Board has no objection to three (3') foot wide sidewalks.

T. Bremner asked about Mr. Hayden's property. Mr. Tanner stated that behind the trees the ground is two feet lower than the proposed sidewalk. It was suggested that the trees be removed and the berm cut so the grade would be level. Mr. Hayden stated that he was not in favor of placing the sidewalk behind the trees.

Motion was made by R. Ayrey and T. Bremner seconded the motion to forward the above noted recommendations to Borough Council. The vote was 8-0 in favor. Motion carried.

For: Ayrey, Bremner, Cann, Corlis, Goldman, Hasser, Pihokken, Whitlock
Agsinst: None
Abstain: None

APPLICATIONS:

- a) Michael J. Lewis & Marianne E. Jaeger
8 Montgomery Avenue; Block 3, Lot 6
Minor Preservation - Construction of Stone Wall

Michael Lewis and Marianne Jaeger were sworn in. Mr. Lewis stated that they would like to improve the front of their property so a stone wall is being proposed. He stated that the design is similar to walls found on other properties in the area. He presented two drawings on how the wall will appear including a cross section of the wall. Mr. Lewis stated that stacked Pennsylvania fieldstone or a similar stone is being considered. He stated that Colonial stone, which is available at the Quarry, is also being considered. The wall is to be 12 inches in height and 12 inches in depth. R. Whitlock confirmed that a sample of the Pennsylvania fieldstone had been delivered to his office and he presented it to the board.

Mr. Lewis advised of other improvements they are considering for the property including a coy pond and a pergola. Ms. Kimson advised if the pergola can be seen from the street, then this would require review and approval by the Planning Board.

Board discussion then took place.

The meeting was opened to the public. Being that no one wished to address the board, the open portion of the meeting was closed. Motion was made by J. Hasser and C. Cann seconded the motion to approve the minor preservation application.

The vote was 8-0 in favor. Motion carried.

For: Ayrey, Bremner, Corlis, Cann, Goldman, Hasser, Pihokken, Whitlock

Against: None

Abstain: None

OLD BUSINESS:

a) Escrow Accounts: Update

R. Whitlock advised that most of the monies (90 to 92 percent) have been returned to the applicants.

Being that there were no other matters before the board, motion was made by R. Whitlock and C. Cann seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. Motion carried.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 9, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerry A. Philip
Secretary